

Quarterly Update
Steamboat Lake Water & Sanitation District
January 2010
www.SLWSD.us

Dear District Member,

No one likes to start out the holidays without water, but as you all know, that is exactly what happened here in our District. It's not easy to find a water line break when snow covers the ground. While it was hard to be grateful at the time, the reason we were able to keep water supplied, albeit somewhat marginally at first, is that the day the water was depleted from our storage tanks was the same day we brought our replacement well on line. By pumping all three wells at the same time, we were able to keep ahead of the break. Special thanks go out to Board members Jim Standish and Bob Hulton as well as to Jon Subr and Rusty Baker, all of whom spent a lot of time working in some very cold weather.

I think this is a good time for a pep talk, which is why the Update is unusually. Many of you do not know our recent history, or may have forgotten. We live in a subdivision in North Routt County and do not have a Public Works Department standing by. We don't have any full time staff like Stagecoach or Steamboat II do. We have two very part time operators: Scott Smith for water, Gilbert Anderson for waste water. Scott Colby is our accountant, Klauzer and Tremaine our legal counsel, and McLaughlin Water Engineers work with us on design and technical issues. These three firms bill us on an hourly basis as needed.

When I came on the Board in 1997, the Elk River Road had just been paved this far north and our little village started to grow. An average of six new homes were built every year until 2008. One year there were twelve new homes. That's more than 65 new households. Another way of looking at it is that we have roughly doubled our population in the last twelve years. We've faced many challenges with this new growth and here are just some of the things we've accomplished:

- We have been on an annual program to video-tape our sewer lines. Infiltration from broken pipes and damaged manholes is one of the biggest problems for sewer systems in the mountains. It runs needless water through our treatment plant which costs money to treat. Each year we work on areas that seem to have the most problems and try to repair a portion of the problems we find. It's one of our largest ongoing maintenance expenses, but the system is 40 years old (built in the 1970's.)
- We now have the entire system "looped" by extending a water line on Clara Way so that we can deliver water from two directions.
- We have installed shutoff valves so that we can isolate portions of the system when repairs need to be made, which we were able to use on this last break.
- We continue to develop "As Built" drawings because the original developers went bankrupt before they completed their work in the 1970's. We learn more each year, with each project we undertake.
- We are on an annual program to replace one or two fire hydrants each year, which is not fast enough for some, but we are making good progress.
- We cooperate with our local fire department in their training exercises and occasional need to put out fires. In return they have helped us get the best possible insurance ratings from the fire protection system we have.
- Two years ago we established a website address, but have been so busy working on other priorities that little work has been done on it. It has great potential and is an opportunity for a volunteer who does not have to be on the Board.
- In 2003 the Board made a controversial decision to change our Rules & Regulations to allow extensions to our service lines when it made sense for the system as a whole and the property owner or developer has been willing to pay all of the cost. These possible extensions were included in the design calculations for final buildout of approximately 300 homes and the few homes that have been built as a result are adding to our revenues.

- In 2004 we started a 2 year project to replace our waste water treatment plant. We were able to secure **\$575,000 in GRANT funding and \$650,000 in a 4% loan** from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Not bad for a population of about 130 homes at the time.
- And, in the nick of time just last month, we brought a very good producing replacement well on line. **We received a \$200,000 GRANT from the State** for this, but not all expenses are in, including some unanticipated legal costs and we will have to run the Treatment plant for a few months to truly understand the operating costs.

While I feel we have truly turned a corner because both the water and wastewater systems are now prepared for full build-out, there are more things that need to be done. Many of you have asked for water meters for a more equitable distribution of cost versus actual usage. It makes good sense, and while new homes have been installing meters for quite a few years, none of them have been activated and there are about 100 homes, built without meters in mind, that have to be retrofitted.

Our Engineers have also recommended that we add more water storage on the east side of our District and of course, there is always the ongoing maintenance. It all takes money and the Board is trying to be a good steward of your money. As a proactive and very small Special District among the many in the State, we have a great reputation with the State for getting things done. It's impressive that we have come up with \$1.4 million in grants and loans, all accomplished by Board members, not consultants.

Clearly if we want to continue our improvements, with only several new taps in the last two years and very few anticipated any time soon, we will either have to raise fees or find more grant money. It's not an impossible task, as we have already proven, but there's where we need help. If anyone would like to help us find grant money, or has suggestions, we would be grateful.

And finally, at our December Board meeting, Jim Standish graciously agreed to take on the role of Board President. No, the holiday water line break did not do me in, or any of the items above for that matter. It's just that after 12 years of service, four as Secretary and five as President, I'm ready for a break. My plans are to remain in the District and to remain on the Board. I'm proud of what we've been accomplishing and I've always appreciated the people in the District who have taken the time to say thank you. As always, we welcome any kind of input from District members and invite you to come to our regular monthly meetings, second Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm at the Steamboat Lake State Park conference room.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Titus

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